

November 13th, 2018

The Honorable Ajit V. Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
455 12th Street, Southwest
Washington, DC, 20544

Dear Chairman Pai,

We write to express our concern about and disapproval of the proposals and tentative conclusions set forth in the FCC's September 25 Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making in *Implementation of Section 621(a)(1) of the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 as Amended by the Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992*, MB Docket 05- 311.

MRVTV is the sole Access Management Organization serving the Mad River Valley community in Central Vermont, including Waitsfield, Warren, Fayston, Moretown, Duxbury and Buel's Gore.

MRVTV provides the only gavel-to-gavel, unfiltered access into local municipal boards and commission, including select boards, planning commissions, development review boards, intra-municipal planning boards, school boards and more. This provides visibility, transparency and creates a permanent public record for the communities. Additionally, this allows the elderly and infirm as well as the housebound to stay engaged and have access to the action of elected officials in real time. This helps all in the community stay informed and make informed decisions.

Below are some quotes regarding MRVTV's value to the community.

- "I used to be concerned that so few residents attend our Select Board meetings on a regular basis. I am always heartened when someone approaches me with a question that was discussed at one of these meetings, and to learn they took the time to watch it on Mad River Valley TV (MRVTV). This happens so often, the Select Board has taken to use the phrase '...and for those of you watching back home...' while we are being filmed, because we know that so many people are watching. MRVTV has certainly increased the potential for civic awareness and involvement in our community." Chuck Martel, Town of Fayston Select Board.
- "MRVTV is an invaluable resource for our communities. Its regular coverage of local municipal and school board meetings keeps people informed and up to date, allowing many who may not have access to such information to participate in the process." Kari Dolan, Town of Waitsfield Select Board member and newly elected Vermont state representative.
- "Mad River Valley Television is an integral part of our rural community and plays a critical role in the communication of the work we do for the Harwood Unified Union School District. Living in a rural community, which covers many square miles, it can be difficult for

community members to attend our public meetings. MRVTV provides accessibility to our meetings for the people we represent in six towns, and seven schools, so they can stay informed of the important work we are completing on their behalf.” Rosemarie White, Harwood Unified Union School District board member from the Town of Warren.

- "Over the years I have been able to see first hand the important role that MRVTV occupies in the Valley community. Years ago I inquired about producing my own public access TV show. From the beginning MRVTV supported my show, "Open Season," by not only encouraging my continued production of it but also by providing a space for taping and a road camera crew for "away" interviews. For years this was a seamless, cooperative effort of extraordinary value. I am grateful to MRVTV for not only their support for "Open Season" but also for the broader good work they perform for the Valley towns and beyond.” Sal Spinosa, Town of Waitsfield Select Board
- “The value of MRVTV to the Mad River Valley community is immeasurable. This great community service allows much broader participation in not only local government meetings but many events throughout the community. Without this community asset the public would not be able to get the information needed to understand the workings of their local community. It is not news but providing real access to the workings of local government.” Bob Ackland, Town of Warren Select Board
- “MRVTV has tremendous value for the Harwood Unified Union School District Board in helping us communicate about our work with the community. It provides people both near and far the opportunity to watch meetings via public access television programming or online at their convenience. MRVTV provides a service that allows countless members of the community to stay informed about what is happening at our meetings and in our school district. Without MRVTV, it would be incredibly challenging to keep the community informed about our work as a board, and the events happening in many of our local schools.” Christine Sullivan, Chair of the Harwood Unified Union School District Board
- “Healthy and engaged communities depend upon the informational and educational opportunities public access television provides. The plethora of local programming is unmatched and always much appreciated. The Waitsfield Select Board truly appreciates the efforts of MRVTV, and hopes they can continue for a very long time.” Paul Hartshorn, Chair Town of Waitsfield Select Board
- "Mad River Valley TV is one of the most important media resources in our community. They've helped us expand our audience for informational community programs through their videotaping and live-streaming services. In turn, this has made us a more locally-known and respected organization. Beyond a local audience, MRVTV's creative programming is content that we share with visitors to tell the unique stories and highlight the tremendous assets of our Mad River Valley. Having the support of MRVTV's services and programming is critical the success of our organization.” Jasmine Bigelow, Executive Director of the Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce

The presence of Vermont’s 25 Community Access Centers enables the residents of Vermont to watch uniquely local programming about their community and local events and issues of interest to them. And that was the intent of the PEG provisions of the 1984 Cable Act – to enhance local

voices, serve local community needs and interests, and strengthen our local democracy. By defining “franchise fee” in an overly broad fashion to include “in-kind” support, the FCC’s proposals will shift the fair balance between cable franchising authorities and cable operators – something that was never the intent of the Act – and could ultimately result in such reduction in franchise fees as to defund PEG Access in our state.

We appreciate your consideration and hope you will protect PEG channels in our community and others by choosing not to adopt many of the proposals in the Further Notice.

Sincerely,

Town of Warren Select Board
Town of Waitsfield Select Board
Town of Fayston Select Board
Town of Moretown Select Board
Harwood Unified Union School District Board

CC: The Honorable Michael O’Rielly, Commissioner
The Honorable Brendan Carr, Commissioner
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner